## Replacement of Accessible Interpretive Boardwalk

### **Executive Summary**

In 1995, following requests from visitors concerning accessibility to the dunes, White Sands National Monument completed a 600- yard interpretive boardwalk. The boardwalk was originally constructed by the Telephone Pioneers of America, AmeriCorps NCCC (the National Civilian Community Corps) and local volunteers. The structure was constructed of CCA treated Southern Yellow Pine.

The wheelchair- accessible Interdune Boardwalk guided visitors through a vegetated area between sand dunes to an overlook which afforded a panoramic view of the dune field. Interpretive signs along the boardwalk explained the plant and animal life of this unique area. For many visitors, the Interdune Boardwalk was the only way to access the dunes. Park Service volunteers roved the boardwalk conducting one- on- one interpretation to visitors, which is often the only interpretive contact many park visitors have.

After eight years of exposure to intense desert heat, aridity and ultraviolet radiation, the wood structure deteriorated at a rate much faster than it could be maintained.

In January 2004, White Sands National Monument successfully competed for a grant from the National Park Foundation (NPF). The grant, part of the Foundation's *Recycling at Work* program, provides recycled plastic lumber for sustainable visitor facilities inside national parks. Funding for the *Recycling at Work* grants are made possible through a generous donation from Unilever. The grant to White Sands totaled \$43,500 in plastic lumber. The National Park Service contributed \$242,003.92 for the project from Recreational Fee Demonstration (referred to as FeeDemo) funds.

The original boardwalk was closed in July, 2004. The new boardwalk is constructed of aluminum, which supports a deck and handrails made of the recycled plastic lumber. The Boardwalk opened to public use in April 2005.

The Boardwalk will present to the visitor, through exhibits and other media, the environmental and long- term economic benefits of using recycled materials and the sustainability that can be achieved through innovative design. A permanent exhibit on the wheelchair- accessible Boardwalk will discuss the concept of sustainability and the use of recycled plastic lumber and recycled aluminum. The new structure will not be tied to a fixed location, like the previous one, and as such can be re- routed to accommodate dune movement.

### Background

#### The National Park Foundation

The National Park Foundation, chartered by Congress, strengthens the enduring connection between the American people and their National Parks by raising private funds, making strategic grants, creating innovative partnerships and increasing public awareness.

The National Park Foundation was chartered in 1967. The Foundation Board consists of the Secretary of Interior, the Director of the National Park Service, ex officio, and at least six private citizens of the Unites States, who serve six year terms.

#### FeeDemo

The Recreational Fee Demonstration Program was a law passed by Congress in 1996 that enables parks charging entrance and use fees to retain 80% of revenue for use in the development and enhancement of visitor facilities. The remaining 20% is shared among parks that do not charge fees. The program was replaced by the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act in 2004.

By law, the monies collected under FeeDemo or the Recreation Enhancement Act cannot be used for park operations.

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